

History Highlights

John Bartram, the nation's first renowned botanist gives accounts of the area in his "Diary of a Journey Through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida from July 1, 1765, to April 10, 1766." Lake Waccamaw was also described as "the pleasantest place that ever I saw in my life," by an unknown 18th century explorer in "A New Voyage to Georgia by a Young Gentleman." But they were not the first to find this paradise.

Archaeologists have discovered evidence of civilization at Lake Waccamaw dating back thousands of years, in addition to artifacts from the Waccamaw-Siouan tribes. In 1797, the state deeded 170,120 acres of the Green Swamp to Stephen Williams, Benjamin Rowell and William Collins for little more than \$7,000. A portion was drained for agricultural use, but in 1904 the property was purchased for timbering.

Lumber companies produced cypress shingles and shipped them by boat across Lake Waccamaw for transport by mule to the nearby train station. Logging and shingle transportation eventually became rail-based and a line was laid along the west side of the lake. Remnants of the railway bridge crossing can still be seen today.

Statewide interest in bay lakes emerged in the early 1800s when legislation prohibited the private ownership of land covered by lake waters. Any lake of 500 acres or more in Bladen, Columbus or Cumberland counties became state property.

In October of 1964, the Board of Conservation and Development tried to obtain land on the lakeshore to establish a state park. But it wasn't until May of 1976 that a state park was formed on the lake when a 273-acre tract of land was purchased by the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation. Additional land purchases for Lake Waccamaw State Park in the mid-1980s, including acreage formerly belonging to the Federal Paper Company and Georgia-Pacific Corporation, helped bring the park to its present size of 1,732 acres.

Visitor Center

In addition to the multiple educational programs offered at Lake Waccamaw State Park, the park visitor center features environmental education exhibits.

The interactive exhibits focus on the singularity of Lake Waccamaw. The exhibit hall offers videos that examine the lake's biological systems and its cultural history, as well as the role of the giant mussel in the lake's ecosystem. Take a walk back in time and recount the days when loggers floated rafts of cypress across the lake. Enjoy photographs that capture the tourism efforts at the lake.

Conveniently located near the park's entrance, the visitor center and exhibit hall are wheelchair accessible. Call the park office for more details.

Green Swamp

The Green Swamp, located near Lake Waccamaw State Park, is an area of major biological significance in North Carolina. It was designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a national natural landmark in 1974.

The 15,722-acre Green Swamp Preserve features examples of pine savannas, bay forests and pocosins with hundreds of different plant species. Unusual animals found in the swamp include the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, Bachman's sparrow and the American alligator.

The preserve is located in Brunswick County, five miles north of Supply. For more information on the Green Swamp, contact The Nature Conservancy.



Picnicking

Picnic tables and grills are conveniently placed beneath tall longleaf pines and turkey oaks draped with Spanish moss. Drinking water and restrooms are nearby. The picnic area and the restrooms, as well as some picnic tables, are accessible for persons with disabilities.

Nature's Classroom

Rangers hold regularly scheduled educational and interpretive programs about Lake Waccamaw State Park. To arrange a special exploration of Lake Waccamaw State Park for your group or class, contact the park office.

Educational materials about Lake Waccamaw State Park have been developed for grades 6-8 and are correlated to North Carolina's competency-based curriculum in science, social studies, mathematics and English/language arts.

The Lake Waccamaw program introduces students to the unique ecosystem of this particular Carolina bay, focusing on water chemistry and the lake's diversity of aquatic life. Accompanying the program is a teacher's booklet and workshop, free of charge to educators.

Flora & Fauna

At least five species on the state's rare plant list — the Venus-hair fern, green-fly orchid, seven-angled pipewort, narrowleaf yellow pondlily and water arrowhead — can be found at Lake Waccamaw. Longleaf pine is abundant, as well as a variety of oaks. Huckleberries are plentiful and the ground is thickly covered with wire grass.

While most people might think of fire as a destructive force, prescribed burns are conducted to help keep vegetative communities alive at Lake Waccamaw. Fires clear nature's debris and make way for more growth. At different times of the year, under controlled conditions, the park staff completes prescribed burns on its acreage.

Lake Waccamaw's water quality contributes to an interesting mix of animal life in the park. Several species are found only in or around the lake and nowhere else on Earth. These species are known as endemics. At Lake Waccamaw, fish endemics include Waccamaw darter, Waccamaw silverside, and Waccamaw killifish. The water also contains a diversity of unusual mollusks. The endemic Waccamaw spike and Waccamaw fatmucket are among the 15 species of mussels and clams found in the lake. And, of the 11 snail species, the Waccamaw amnicola and the Waccamaw siltsnail are also endemics.

On a warm day, you can see Carolina anoles and black racers sunning themselves along the shoreline. The sounds of the spring peeper, southern leopard frog, bullfrog and cricket frog fill the night air. Brimley's chorus frog and the state-threatened American alligator can also be seen.

Brown-headed nuthatches, parula warblers and white-eyed vireos fill the trees in the summer, making Lake Waccamaw a bird watcher's haven. During the winter, numerous species of waterfowl can also be seen on the lake. While at the park, you might catch a glimpse of a white-tailed deer or fox — or, if you are lucky, you may see a bobcat or black bear.



Carolina Bays

Lake Waccamaw is one of hundreds of Carolina bays in North Carolina. The term "bay" may be a bit confusing because, in this case, it does not refer to a body of water. Rather, the name for these natural basins originates from the fact that there is an abundance of sweet bay, loblolly bay and red bay trees growing beside these watery, oval depressions in the earth.

Scientists are not sure how the Carolina bays originated. Some scientists theorize that underground springs, meteor showers or wind and wave action formed the bays. But no theory has gained universal acceptance.

While most bays are covered in vegetation, some — including Lake Waccamaw — contain open water. Jones, Salters, Baytree, Singletary and White lakes are similar North Carolina state park bay lakes with open water. All Carolina bays are unusual, yet Lake Waccamaw is probably the most unique.

While many bays are small, ranging about 500 feet in length, Lake Waccamaw covers nearly 9,000 acres and has 14 miles of shoreline. Many bays are also totally dependent on rainfall, but Lake Waccamaw gets its water supply from the Friar Swamp drainage.

Most Carolina bays also have naturally high levels of acid, making the water unable to sustain a large diversity of aquatic life, but limestone bluffs along Lake Waccamaw's north shore neutralize the lake's water, making make it suitable for many species of plants and animals.

To learn more about the plants and animals at Lake Waccamaw State Park, visit our Web site at www.ncparks.gov.

Water Sports

Boating is a popular pastime at Lake Waccamaw. There is no boat access in the park, but two free public boat launch areas are available nearby. One is maintained by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) while the other is operated by Columbus County. Powerboats and sailboats may be launched from the boat ramps, but parking is limited. The waters of Lake Waccamaw are park property; all park rules apply.

Fishing: Fifty-two species of game and non-game fish swim in Lake Waccamaw. The WRC stocks the lake with largemouth bass, bluegill, shellcracker and redbreast sunfish. All regulations of the WRC are enforced.

Camping

The adventuresome camper will find plenty to enjoy at Lake Waccamaw's four primitive group camping areas nestled beneath the trees. Picnic tables, fire circles and pit toilets are located nearby. All supplies, including drinking water, must be packed to the sites.

Organized groups may make reservations. Otherwise, campsites are available on a first-come basis for \$9 per night with an additional fee of \$1 per person if the group contains more than eight people. Register at the visitor center for a camping permit.



Trails

Lakeshore Trail: The longest trail in the park, Lakeshore Trail begins at the visitor center and follows the lakeshore to the Waccamaw River. The trail passes through a variety of ecosystems during its five-mile course. Marked by white blazes, Lakeshore Trail cuts through a pine forest, past one of the oldest stands of cypress trees in the area, under towering hickory trees, alongside grass beds in the lake that provide cover for a variety of fish species and beside sandy beaches perfect for picnicking or pausing to gaze across the lake.

Sand Ridge Nature Trail: The Sand Ridge Nature Trail is a .75-mile loop that begins and ends near the picnic area. Guides for this trail are available in the picnic area. From the trail, hikers can view reindeer moss, Spanish moss, reindeer lichen, pond pine, longleaf pine, turkey oak, laurel oak and hickory. Trees are marked to help identify the route.

Pine Woods Trail: A 2.5-mile trail that winds through the park from the picnic area to the visitor center allows hikers to view the diverse plant life found at Lake Waccamaw State Park. Common plants along this trail include longleaf pines, bay trees and turkey oaks. With a careful eye, hikers can even spot Venus flytraps. Because the flytraps are a rare species, they should not be disturbed.

Loblolly Trail: Marked with red trail blazes, Loblolly Trail is a one-mile loop. Similar to the Pine Woods Trail in content, this loop begins and ends at the visitor center.

Boardwalks: A gravel path from the picnic area parking lot winds through the picnic ground and leads to a 700-foot boardwalk from which hikers can get a closer look at the various plants of the bay forest bordering the lake. The boardwalk ends at a 375-foot pier perfect for fishing. An additional accessible boardwalk that traverses the bay forest is located near the visitor center and is complete with two sun shelters.

Rules & Regulations

Some of our rules are posted throughout the park; a complete list is available at the park office. Help preserve our natural resources by observing the following:

❑ The removal of any plant, animal, rock or artifact is prohibited.

❑ All North Carolina state parks are wildlife preserves. Hunting and trapping are prohibited.

❑ On the lake, please conform to the regulations of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation.

❑ Any special event or activity on the lake requires a permit from park staff.

❑ Do not litter. Help maintain a clean environment by putting trash in the proper receptacles. State law requires aluminum cans to be placed in recycling containers.

❑ Firearms and fireworks are prohibited.

❑ The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

❑ Food and beverages are prohibited on the boardwalks and piers.

❑ North Carolina motor vehicle traffic laws apply in the park.

❑ Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet.

For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, please remember these safety tips.

❑ Do not feed or approach wildlife. North Carolina is experiencing a rise in rabies cases. Report sick or aggressive animals to rangers.

❑ Wear a life vest at all times while on the water.

❑ Be alert to approaching storms. The lake can rapidly become rough in high winds.

❑ Ticks, chiggers and mosquitoes may be encountered in the park. Insect repellent should be used.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or an explanation of park rules.

Welcome!

The cool, tea-colored waters at first appear similar to other lakes in the area, but Lake Waccamaw is one of the most unique bodies of water in the world. You will find here species of animals found nowhere else on the planet, rare plants and endangered animals.

At Lake Waccamaw, you can view one of the greatest geological mysteries of the eastern United States — the phenomenon of Carolina bays. Limestone bluffs along the north shore neutralize Lake Waccamaw's water, making the lake different from any other Carolina Bay. Nearby, you can catch a glimpse of a botanical wonder — the Green Swamp.

From its sandy shorelines to its tree-lined natural areas, Lake Waccamaw offers peaceful surroundings, an intriguing natural history and fun in the sun.



Information

To learn more about Lake Waccamaw State Park, contact:

Lake Waccamaw State Park
1866 State Park Drive
Lake Waccamaw, NC 28450
(910) 646-4748
denr.dpr.lake.waccamaw@lists.ncmail.net
www.ncparks.gov

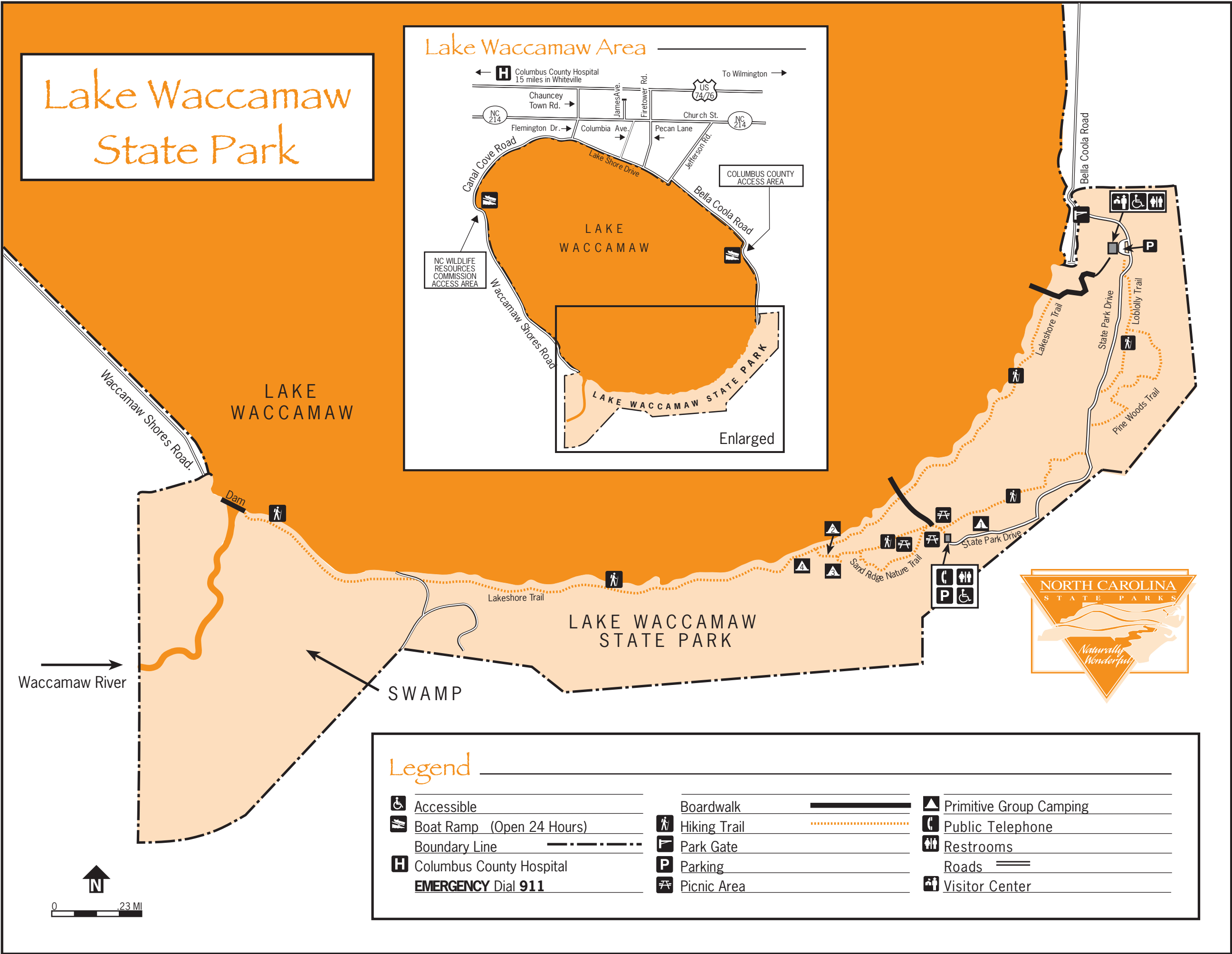
For information about the Green Swamp, contact:

The Nature Conservancy
Box 805
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(919) 967-7007

Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources
1615 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699
(919) 733-4181

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N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Environment and Natural Resources



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State Park

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Lake Waccamaw State Park is located in Columbus County, 38 miles west of Wilmington and 12 miles east of Whiteville. The park is located off Bella Coola Road. Look for signs on U.S. 74/76 or N.C. 214.

Park Hours

November - February	8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
March - May, September & October	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
June - August	8 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Closed Christmas Day	